DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 710 EC 210 644

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TITLE California Bilingual Special Education Model Sites (1984-1986): Programs and Research.
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 9p.; In: Schools and the Culturally Diverse Exceptional Student: Promising Practices and Future Directions; see EC 210 633. Paper presented at the Ethnic and Multicultural Symposia (Dallas, TX, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Bilingual Education; Demography; *Demonstration Programs; *Disabilities; *Educational Practices; Elementary Education; *Hispanic Americans; Program Effectiveness; Resource Room Programs; Special Education; Student Characteristics; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS Regular and Special Education Relationship

ABSTRACT

The paper, originally given at a 1986 Ethnic and Multicultural Symposium, reports the findings of school-based research in California to identify effective bilingual special education programs and instructional practices. The educational program at one model site (Azusa Unified School District) is described including the elementary school demographics (70% Hispanic); student characteristics; the school-wide approach; instructional practices in reading, language, spelling, writing, and math; and prereferral interventions. Stressed for program replication is the need for a strong interface among regular education, bilingual education, and special education staff. It was concluded that the Azusa program includes program components identified in the literature as necessary for effectively meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically different exceptional students. (DB)

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ED 298710

California Bilingual Special Education Model Sites (1984–1986): Programs and Research

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The California State Department of Education (1983) reports that over 1 million language minority students are enrolled in California schools. This creates a need for programs that effectively serve culturally and linguistically different students.

In identifying components of a bilingual special education program that meets the needs of its students, Baca and Cervantes (1984, pp. 24, 271) suggest that the following be included:

1. An ongoing, broadly based, nonbiased assessment.
2. Prevention viewed as a priority.
3. Early intervention.
4. Some disabilities viewed as symptoms rather than disorders.
5. A broad range of special education services.
6. Instruction provided in the student's primary language.
7. Regular classroom teachers (including bilingual teachers) involved in the program planning and implementation.
8. A variety of special education services to meet the variety of disabilities.
9. Parents provided with maximum amounts of information in a language they understand and meaningfully involved in planning and reinforcing instruction.

This chapter reports the research findings of the Loyola Marymount University/SERN Bilingual Unit grant project with respect to effective bilingual special education programs. The research base was one of the California Bilingual Special Education Model Sites, the Bilingual Special Education Resource Specialist Program (RSP) at Paramount Elementary School in the Azusa Unified School District. This description is the first step in this project's determination of the effectiveness of instructional strategies in bilingual special education.

OVERVIEW OF MODEL SITES PROGRAM

Recognizing the importance of meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically different exceptional children (CLDE), the Programs, Curriculum, and Training Unit of the Special Education Division, California State Department of Education, authorized the funding of several school districts as Bilingual Special Education Model Sites. A committee of selected educators from throughout the state evaluated the proposals regarding the extent to which they represented promising practices in bilingual special education, such as those suggested by Baca and Cervantes (1984).

EC 210644

Six school districts were selected and funded as Bilingual Special Education Model Sites. These districts represented both urban and rural settings, as well as those serving both Hispanic and Asian populations. Each district was also selected for unique features such as nonpsychometric assessment process, prereferral bilingual student study team, parent as co-learner, and so forth. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the various sites.

BILINGUAL SPECIAL EDUCATION PERSONNEL PREPARATION PROJECT

In 1985, a personnel preparation grant was awarded by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services of the U.S. Department of Education to Loyola Marymount University and the Special Education Resource Network/Bilingual Unit (SERN/Bilingual Unit), an agency of the Programs, Curriculum and Training Unit of the Special Education Division, California State Department of Education. The intention of the project was to identify effective instructional strategies in bilingual special education, then integrate them into a special education preservice program at the university and to disseminate these strategies through subsequent SERN/Bilingual Unit training. The research component of the project involved the Model Sites. Selected sites were the primary source of data collection in terms of effective instructional strategies.

PROJECT DESIGN

An ethnographic approach was used to identify instructional practices in this Model Site through a description of the educational program as well as its development. This approach included field observation, interviews, and collection of work products. Data were collected over a 6-week period during the 1985–1986 academic year.

DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

Azusa Unified School District is located 20 miles east of Los Angeles in the San Gabriel Valley. Median household income was $16,000/year, and 89% of the families were employed in skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled occupations. The major ethnic groups and their percentages represented by district students were as follows: (a) Hispanic, 52%; (b) Anglo, 43%; (c) Blacks, Asians, and Native Americans, 5%. Of the 600 students enrolled at Paramount School, approximately 70% were Hispanic, and 32% of these students were limited English proficient (LEP), as measured by the IDEA Proficiency Test or the Language Assessment Scales (LAS).

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The Bilingual Special Education Research Specialist Program (RSP) involved 24 students in grades 1 through 6, with the majority being in grades 3 and 5. All students were average or above average in intellectual performance and qualified as learning disabled. As is characteristic of most learning handicapped programs, students' reading scores varied widely based on results from the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT). Based on the WRAT, reading performance ranged from kindergarten to seventh grade. Spelling performance ranged from first to third grades and math performance ranged from kindergarten to fifth grade.

Students were evaluated for their English language proficiency. Nine (38%) were identified as LEP and 15 (62%) were identified as fluent English proficient (FEP).

TABLE 1

Bilingual Special Education Model Sites

Model Sites	*School*	*Population*	*Urban/ Rural*	*Practices*
Azusa Unified School District	Paramount	Hispanic	Urban	Bilingual Student Study Team, Parent as Co-Leader, Coordination of Special Education/Bilingual Programs, English/ Spanish Computer Lab, Program Interventions/ Modifications
San Joaquin County Office of Education		Hispanic	Rural	K–12 SDC Program, Referral, Assessment, Parent Involvement, Bilingual Communicatively Handicapped Class, Bilingual Learning Handicapped Class
Sweetwater Union High School District	Southwest High Southwest Jr.	Hispanic	Urban	Bilingual Parent Facilitator, Continuum of Interventions, Programming and Service Delivery, Bilingual SST, Grades 9–12
Winters Joint Unified School District	Waggoner	Hispanic	Rural	K–4 Program, Bilingual Student Study Team, Bilingual Staff/Specialized Staff Coordination, Utilization of Limited Resources
Oakland Unified School District		Chinese Indochinese Hispanic	Urban	K–6 Program, Bilingual Special Education Program, Assessment & Curriculum Instruction of Special Education
San Francisco Unified School District		Black Chinese Hispanic	Urban	Nonpsychometric Assessment Process, Bilingual Special Day Classes, K–12 Program

SCHOOL-WIDE APPROACH

A unique feature of this particular program was the extensive interaction among all school personnel and the commitment of the administration to fostering a cooperative school atmosphere. From interviews with administrators, regular education teachers, bilingual education teachers, and support personnel, it was apparent that there was notable staff involvement in all facets of the school's educational program.

This particular site implemented a school-wide approach to bilingual special education with a strong interface between the bilingual program and the special education program. As a

result of administrative support, bilingual special education was an integral part of the school, not an isolated component.

The RSP classroom was located in the front of the school among other regular education classrooms. Students were served by the regular education program, the reading resource room, and the bilingual resource room, as well as the RSP. RSP students were instructed using the same curriculum and texts as the rest of the school in areas of reading, language, spelling, writing, and math. Students' programs were monitored by the RSP teacher until each was fully mainstreamed in a subject area.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

In describing instructional practices, it was important to consider the features of each student's class schedule (i.e., extent and nature of regular education, special education, bilingual education, etc.). The student's schedule was based on an Individual Education Program (IEP), which was both linguistically and academically appropriate to the student's needs. Language of instruction was designated on each IEP.

Reading Program

A significant factor contributing to the success of the instructional program included the use of a school-wide departmentalized reading program. All students were assigned to groups according to reading level. RSP students remained with their regular education class until their scheduled RSP reading instruction. While in the regular class, the student worked on materials provided by the Resource Specialist teacher, thus allowing participation in the school-wide schedule while receiving appropriate individualized reading instruction.

An important component of the reading program was the selection of the reading series. For FEP students, the Ginn series and Specific Skills series were used. Santillana and Specific Skills (Spanish version) were used for Spanish reading. For both language groups, the monitoring procedure was the same; end-of-unit and/or end-of-book tests were administered by the reading resource teacher (English readers) and the bilingual resource teacher (Spanish readers). These tests were the same as those taken by the regular school population. As with any other student in the school, if an RSP student failed some portion of the test, the appropriate resource teacher provided supplemental materials for the student to remediate his or her weak area.

A major area of interest in a bilingual special education program is the transition of LEP students from Spanish reading to English reading. In the Paramount program, LEP students received primary language instruction while learning English and were transitioned into an English program only when they met criteria. The criteria were (a) oral language proficiency in English as measured by the IDEA Proficiency Test or the LAS (must score LES or FES); (b) ESL/IDEA kit, Mastery Level IV or Rainbow Level, Intermediate Fluency (Stage 4); and (c) reading proficiency in Spanish as measured by Spanish Reading Keys, Mastery Level 6, Mi Mundo. In addition, teacher checklists for Spanish language proficiency and English language proficiency were used when determining transfer to English reading. The following are types of student behaviors listed on these checklists:

1. The child is speaking in sentences in Spanish using correct syntax.
2. The child is able to decode words and read in Spanish with comprehension.
3. The child is using his or her Spanish reading skills in creative writing.
4. The child is able to understand a variety of directions in English and follow them correctly.
5. The child is conversing with English peers in the classroom and playground.
6. The child is participating in ESL instruction.

It is noteworthy that an effort was made to use culturally and linguistically appropriate reading activities and curriculum. Often the teacher and the aides would try to elicit the students' personal cultural experiences relating to the lesson.

Language Program

In terms of language development, LEP students received instruction in English, Spanish, and English as a second language (ESL), as determined by the needs of the students. Anglo students could receive Spanish as a second language with parental permission. As with other academic areas, the language program for RSP students followed the language curriculum of the school. For example, with respect to ESL, the students used commercial as well as noncommercial materials. Some commercial materials included Santillana's "The Picture Collection" and the "Rainbow Collection"; the Peabody Language Development Kit; the Mots Worter "Language Treasure Kit"; and the "IDEA Kit." Various programs for the classroom's six computers were used extensively. To reinforce language development, Josten's Learning System, which included a voice synthesizer, was used by the students for independent practice of English language skills. In addition, some computer software packages included Binet International, LOGO Guided Discovery Kit, and Kidwriter SS (Spinnaker Software Corporation).

Spelling Program

The spelling program involved mastery of words which were derived from the reading curriculum, in both English and Spanish. Spelling tests, administered in the RSP classroom, were used to measure mastery.

Writing Program

Power Writing, a technique for developing written expression, was used in the RSP classroom as well as in the regular program. It was conducted in English and Spanish following specific rules for implementation. Kidwrite, a computer software program, was also adapted for use with Spanish-speaking students.

Math Program

The math program for the RSP students included basic computational as well as functional skills. The curricula, again, corresponded to the curricula used by the regular education program, that is, Addison-Wesley.

In addition, use of manipulatives was prevalent. Mastery was determined by end-of-unit and end-of-book tests administered by the Math Resource Specialist.

Delivery of Instruction

Instruction for the subject areas was conducted by the RSP teacher and aides, regular education teacher, bilingual education teacher (when appropriate), support personnel, and parent volunteers. The RSP classroom had four aides, three of whom were bilingual. The aides were trained through inservice training conducted by the County of Los Angeles and district and school site personnel. It was noted that the RSP teacher functioned as a master teacher in terms of her relationship with the aides. An example of this is the aides' involvement in the daily planning sessions. The RSP teacher led discussion of the following day's activities and aides gave suggestions, provided input/ideas, and identified problems the students were experiencing. While the aides played a significant role in planning, the RSP teacher maintained responsibility for final decisions.

The instruction in the RSP classroom was delivered by means of small group arrangement. The RSP teacher and each aide had responsibility for a group. These groups rotated approximately once a month, ensuring that each student received instructional time with the

RSP teacher. In addition, students received group practice in areas of need from the parent volunteers. Parents were trained through the Parents as Co-Learners program. Workshops were set up in which the parent and his or her child both benefited from the presentation—for example, nutrition and use of math manipulatives for home practice.

English and Spanish were used as the languages of instruction based upon the needs of the student. Content areas that were taught in Spanish included reading, writing, spelling, and math. At times, with the LEP students who had been transitioned into English instruction, Spanish was still the language of communication. To promote primary language development, student-teacher interaction was often in Spanish. This was observed in casual conversation, in clarification of concepts, and for classroom management. For example, the observer noted that during a math lesson devoted to helping students tell time in English, an LEP student used Spanish to request assistance. The teacher then explained the procedure in Spanish. In this instance, understanding of concepts was of primary importance with continual use of English being secondary.

PREREFERRAL INTERVENTIONS

One of the key elements which determined the district's designation as a Model Site was the school's Student Study Team (SST). This system was part of an attempt to intervene in areas of student need, thus possibly averting an inappropriate special education referral. When a student was having a problem in the regular classroom, the teacher was expected to implement and document at least eight of the academic or behavioral interventions shown in Table 2.

If those interventions did not prove successful, the student was then referred to the SST. This was a three-level process in which alternative interventions were considered before reaching Level 3, which was referral to special education.

Parent and student participation was encouraged throughout the entire process and an interpreter/translator was provided for non-English speaking individuals. If a student required special education assessment, it was provided in the student's primary language by both the bilingual psychologists and bilingual speech and language personnel.

Another preventive measure implemented at the school was a newly instituted developmental kindergarten where students who do not succeed in the first year of kindergarten are retained. If there is no progress the second year, steps are taken to provide early intervention, possibly through placement in special education after completion of the SST process.

As a function of the RSP teacher's role, it was observed that extensive consultation services were offered to all school personnel. The RSP teacher set up a conference schedule which included a time slot for every regular education teacher who had an RSP student. During this time, the RSP teacher noted progress and offered suggestions regarding strategies and curriculum. Much conferencing took place informally as well. It appeared that the efforts on behalf of the RSP teacher as coordinator/consultant fostered a relationship in which the regular teachers were willing to implement any intervention necessary in the interest of the RSP student.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REPLICATION OF THE PROGRAM

The program as presented in this chapter was in its third year of implementation. Interviews with administrators revealed that several factors were involved in the development of this program and need to be considered in the initiation of any similar bilingual special education program.

The most significant requisite is a strong interface among regular education, bilingual education, and special education staff. To initiate this interface, a high-quality, regular education program must be established as a foundation, with the building of strong bilingual

TABLE 2

Classroom Interventions Prior to Referral

1. Conference with student.
2. Parent involvement through conferencing, class visits, assists at home.
3. Change seat.
4. Study carrels.
5. Time-out.
6. Develop reward system/behavior modification.
7. Assertive discipline.
8. Special contract and/or agreement.
9. Emphasis on student strength by special recognition.
10. Provide buddy/tutorial system.
11. Modify assignments.
12. Academic regrouping.
13. Remedial reading.
14. Remedial math.
15. Classroom change for subject area.
16. After school help/counseling.
17. Use of different materials.
18. Tutoring (cross-age, classroom aide).
19. Reteaching.
20. Learner keeps study book.
21. Daily rehearsal of student expectation.
22. Classroom management.
23. Other learning modalities.

education and special education programs as the next step. This process should ensure a well-developed bilingual special education program.

Staff development is a key feature of a high-quality school program. This can be accomplished by using free services of local county agencies as well as district and state trainers such as the SERN/Bilingual Unit. Additional means might be consistent sharing with staff of current research and new developments in education as well as release time for faculty to visit other programs.

In order to build an expert staff, it was suggested that site administrators be involved in recruitment rather than relying only on district personnel offices. Furthermore, existing staff members should be treated as experts. One suggestion is to organize weekly leadership meetings in which selected faculty, that is, reading resource teacher, RSP teacher, and others, meet weekly with building principals to provide input regarding school business.

To create a positive atmosphere, the site administrator must have high expectations for staff, students, and community involvement. Professionalism and cooperation among staff should prevail. Derogatory statements by staff about students and their families should not be tolerated. Students should be expected to achieve their highest potential academically and socially. Parent/community participation in school activities and business should be expected and encouraged. Mutual respect among these groups can contribute to this atmosphere.

Finally, financial support can come from several sources. It is recommended that additional funds be sought out, such as state and federal grants or Title VII funds.

CONCLUSION

Observations, field notes, and interviews provide evidence that the Azusa Unified School District Bilingual Special Education program is addressing the components identified by Baca and Cervantes for effectively meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically different exceptional students. Furthermore, the program provided the students with the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive environment, one that was culturally and linguistically sensitive to their needs.

As part of the Loyola Marymount University/SERN Bilingual Unit grant project, the findings discussed in this study, as well as data gathered at other sites, will be disseminated through the special education teacher training program at LMU and inservice training by the SERN Bilingual Unit.

REFERENCE

Baca, L. M., & Cervantes, H. T. (1984). *The bilingual special education interface*. St. Louis, MO: Times Mirror/Mosby College.

NOTE: Preparation of this chapter was supported in part by a U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Rehabilitative Services Grant #G008535047 to Loyola Marymount University and the Special Education Resource Network/Bilingual Unit.